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Peter-Ben Smit

The Resurrection of the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 11: Paul as a Theologian of the Body in Conversation with Judith Butler

Abstract:

Paulus ist in der Regel nicht bekannt als ein Theologe des Körpers – sein Ruf ist im Gegenteil sogar eher körperfeindlich. In diesem Beitrag werden seine Äusserungen über die Zusammenkünfte der Gemeinde in Korinth (1. Korinther 11,17-34) in ein Gespräch gebracht mit dem Denken Judith Butlers über Protestversammlungen und deren performative und körperliche Dimensionen. Es stellt sich dabei heraus, dass Paulus durchaus ein Denker ist, dessen Überlegungen gerade bei körperlichen Erfahrungen einsetzen.

Bodies do not get much attention in the New Testament.¹ This is somewhat surprising, given that they are frequently there (or implied) and are of high importance. One may think of the bodies of people who are being healed, eating bodies, the body of Jesus on the cross and the (near) touching of his risen body by Mary (of Magdalene) and Thomas. By contrast, philosopher and gender critic Judith Butler has emphasized the importance of the added value of bodiliness in her *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*.² Her point of departure is that space is always physical because the political and social (there is no sociability without bodies) are always bodily. Butler focuses, therefore, on the distinct character and added value of specifically *bodily* assemblies, by means of which bodies claim space (including public space) and thereby shape it. In doing so, they claim several freedoms for themselves, or, at least, they point to the limitation of freedoms in certain respects, thereby addressing such limitations – this applies for instance to the freedom of movement and the freedom of congregation.

This contribution focuses on an early Christian assembly of human bodies and asks the question: does the analysis of 1 Corinthians 11.17-24, a pericope to which reference is so frequently made in discussions about the “Lord’s Supper”³ or the Eucharist, informed by Butler’s work lead to any new insights?

The answer to this question will show how, for Paul, the body and the bodily experience are a fundamental point of departure for this “theologizing” (if that term is permissible for Paul). This is surprising for a theologian who is often considered to be someone who has quite a negative attitude vis-à-vis the body. In this context, it will also be indicated how Paul regulates “typically male behavior” in the congregation – which may also be a somewhat unexpected course of action for such a dyed in the wool patriarch as Paul (is often considered to be). All of this will also lead to a consideration of the value of Butler’s work for New Testament studies.

Thus, this paper combines research into early Christian forms of self-organization (in particular by means of meals) and contemporary research in to (protesting) assemblies and the role of bodiliness and, with that, gender in them. The outline of Butler’s theoretical perspective and the analysis of 1 Corinthians 11.17-34 will be preceded by a succinct outline of the history of the text’s interpretation, with particular reference to the body, in order to position the current exegesis better.

The Rise of Bodies in the New Testament: Hermeneutical Preliminaries

Bodiliness as such hardly ever plays a leading role in the (modern) interpretation of the New Testament, even if bodies frequently occur on its pages. I would suggest, without being able to review the entire history of scholarship here, that bodies have often been seen either as signifiers of something else, what I would call a ‘conceptual’ view of bodies, or as vehicles for social relationships, while the body as such has remained somewhat under researched. Additionally, the role of bodies in rituals, such as the Lord’s Supper, has not been the focus of too much attention: the exegetical focus would typically be on the meaning of the ritual, its shape, and its social function. With regard to 1 Corinthians 11.17-34, this becomes visible when considering its role in disputes concerning the Eucharist from (at least) the 16th century onwards,⁴ where the focus is on the shape and meaning of the ritual (and on the body of Christ, rather than on that of the participants), its interpretation in later, i.e. modern historical scholarship, interested in the form of the earliest Christian meals (bodies are not considered

separately, they are part of a ritual),⁵ and the attention that ritual and social relationships have received in interpretations from the latter decades of the 20th century onwards (the body is a vehicle for social relationships).⁶ This survey is somewhat ideal-typical and certainly not exhaustive, but it does seem to do justice to a trajectory in scholarship and in hermeneutical agendas. Epistemologies and theological agendas have played a role in creating this situation but, certainly in more recent times and in Western academic settings, prosperity and the absence of hunger may also have played a role in rendering invisible aspects of the body that have to do with food and hunger – in this respect, the contemporary Western context differs significantly from contexts in which scarcity and famine were realities, such as the Greco-Roman world itself.⁷

From the vantage point chosen for this essay, it is interesting to observe that in all of these cases the actual physical bodies of the Corinthians hardly play a role in the exegetical analysis. Bodies function continually as the bearers of something else: views of the presence of Christ, liturgical shapes, or as instruments for social behavior.⁸ This is all the more interesting, because the text itself is concerned with something bodily *par excellence*: eating. This observation encourages engagement with approaches that stress the body more. These certainly exist within the field of exegesis as well; a brief survey of these approaches leads in to a discussion of the approach that will be more fully discussed and used here, i.e. Butler's. First, a materialistically orientated exegesis inspired by liberation theology has a good reason for drawing attention to the body. Second, feminist and (other) gender critical approaches, including queer and 'masculist' approaches, emphasize the body, bodiliness and the physical/experiential side of knowledge. Queer approaches such as Marcella Althaus-Reid's, seem to be particularly promising in this respect.⁹ Third, the emerging field of dis/ability studies is a field in which attention to the body is of obvious importance and which may exercise an influence on the field of biblical exegesis at large.¹⁰ Fourth, ritual approaches can be mentioned also, given that rituals are inherently bodily in nature. The work of Judith Butler fits into the second category of these approaches, given that her work is a combination of critical theory and (critical) gender studies. For the study of early Christian texts, her work is of interest because of the strong connection that she makes between bodiliness and assemblies and the importance of the former for the latter. When one assumes, as I do, that early Christian communities were to a very large extent characterized by regular assemblies, particularly in the shape of meals (even if not only), it is quite inviting to use Butler's work as

a lens for the interpretation of early Christian texts, especially as far as the connection between bodiliness and assembly is concerned.

Performativity as a Key for Approaching the Interaction of Bodies

The point of departure of Judith Butler's *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* is the role of the physical in human gatherings, in particular in the context of assemblies and demonstrations during the Arab Spring of 2010-2011. Her central thesis is that acting in a conjoined and coordinated manner is an embodied way to question important (and therefore often somewhat invisible – the normative hides within apparent 'normality') aspects of the political order.¹¹ In pursuing this, she is particularly interested in the communicative aspect of bodies that gather and act together:

Assemblies of physical bodies have an expressive dimension that cannot be reduced to speech, for the very fact of people gathering "says" something without always relying on speech.¹²

Accordingly, public space is also always shaped in an embodied manner and the bodies involved in this are always – as all bodies always are – communicative and communicating bodies. This is an insight that is both quite general and self-explanatory. Paying a visit to someone in person and having a direct encounter with someone communicates in a different manner and communicates something differently than sending a postcard or an email, or making a phone call, whether supported by Skype, FaceTime and the like, or not. Or, using a ritual example: when a young woman who is eight months pregnant and a terminally ill elderly woman are sitting next to each other in church and receive from a priest's hands the Body and Blood of Christ communicates togetherness in a rather different manner than an email stating 'I will think of you, best wishes N.N.'¹³ Bodies become meaningful in relation to other bodies, both in communication and relation.

In Butler's essay, the body is continuously linked with the notion of 'precariousness', which refers to a 'precarious', vulnerable, threatened mode of existence. In Butler's words:

that politically induced condition of maximised vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence, to street or domestic violence, or other forms not enacted by states but for which the judicial instruments of states fail to provide sufficient protection or redress.¹⁴

A public gathering or assembly of bodies, in their full political, social and communicative significance and in all their precariousness is, accordingly, the main topic of Butler's book. In order to describe and explore the functioning of such groups of bodies, she uses the vocabulary of performativity, as she has also used it in earlier work, where it plays a key role.¹⁵ She understands performativity as follows:

performativity characterizes first and foremost that characteristic of linguistic utterances that in the moment of making the utterance makes something happen or brings some phenomenon into being.¹⁶

When a body 'performs' in the sense that it becomes part of a 'performance,' e.g., an assembly, it always also enters into relation to other bodies, or, the other way around, because of the particular communicative and relational performance of a body, all sorts of relations are established and communicated, which always also involves the creation, perpetuation or transformation of relationships of power. All of this also means that precisely a 'precarious' existence, a vulnerable existence, in other words, becomes visible and can be experienced in and through the body. When, for instance in the context of a demonstration or some other political gathering, various precarious bodies come together and begin to relate to each other, Butler argues, they can make visible and question important and invisible aspects and dimensions of the political order; she calls it "an embodied form of calling into question the inchoate and powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political."¹⁷ This is her core thesis, as was already indicated. Such a gathering makes invisible hierarchies visible and hence a matter of discussion, as through performing them through a gathering, 'precarious bodies' begin to claim certain rights that are otherwise not granted to them. These are rights such as the right to freedom of movement, the right to assembly, the right to 'visibility' in the public sphere, and the right to freedom of expression. Not being able to gather in this way, or not being permitted to do so, or simply not being supposed to do so, as it may be expressed by forbidding, deriding or breaking up a (public) assembly of (precarious) bodies makes visible the absence of such rights, at least for the particular human (bodie)s that sought together and were not permitted to do so.¹⁸

When considering these precarious bodies, Butler stresses that gender plays a key role. Most of the precarious bodies involved, namely, also embody non-normative and therefore easily marginalized (as 'not normal') – one may think of women in general, transgender people, men with a 'disabled' body, or with a body of the 'wrong' ethnicity or sexuality, and so on. As

gender is intersectional, coming into being by being constructed at the intersection of a range of characteristics, whenever gender is involved, it is never just about gender (as in ‘sex’). In a perceptive review of Butler’s book, Bushnell pointed out that the (im)possibility of a public assembly makes visible all sorts of questions:

questions surrounding which humans count as human and are eligible to appear, what justice is, what we call those who do not and cannot appear as ‘subjects’ within hegemonic discourse, how the excluded appear and the living and social conditions of agency.¹⁹

All of this becomes visible through the collective and connected presence of a set of bodies in the public sphere – or through their forced absence, for instance due to the prohibition of a gathering.

More happens, however, than just ‘being there’, which may sound somewhat passive. On the contrary, Butler argues, the presence of a crowd does not only involve its ‘being seen’ (as an object), but also its own ‘seeing’, i.e., its acting as a subject that has its own perspective on what it perceives. As ‘precarious’ bodies, the bodies of a (protesting) crowd are usually subjected to the gaze of the ‘other’, who determines who they are and how they are to behave. When they appear in public as an assembly, however, they can, as it were, ‘look back’ and ensure that their perspective counts as well. A very literal example of this is ‘filming back’, i.e.: not only being filmed (by the [security] police, for instance, and for the purpose of identification), but also filming the police and the police’s actions, thereby making this visible to the gaze of others and open to evaluation and criticism. In this manner, existing relationships of power are questioned. This is part of a process of acquiring rights and freedoms, given that these only exist in relation to others; ‘precarious bodies’ achieve such acquisition by appearing together in the public space and by claiming this space for themselves – or by claiming a place for themselves in this space. In presenting this line of argument, Butler connects with the work of Hannah Arendt, who also stressed the relational character of freedom; in Butler’s words:

Freedom does not come from me or from you; it can and does happen as a relation between us, or indeed, among us. So this is not a matter of finding the human dignity within each person, but rather of understanding the human as a relational and social being, one whose action depends upon equality and articulates the principle of equality...The claim of equality is not only spoken or written, but is made precisely when bodies appear together, or rather, when through their action, they bring the space of appearance into being.²⁰

Such a relation of freedom (or lack thereof) between human beings has, as Butler emphasizes, a physical aspect as well, especially when attention is paid to the dimension of vulnerability and the manner in which people gather as an assembly. The public sphere is, therefore, always shaped in an embodied and, accordingly, communicative manner, by means of which freedoms and rights are negotiated performatively. Such shaping of the public space is, for these reasons, always bound up with (im)possibilities of being able to exercise rights and freedoms and with the relationships of power that undergird this. – To be sure, when considering an assembly, also one of precarious bodies, everything that is said about the shaping of the public space, as it takes place between the assembly and other parts of society, also applies to the internal shaping of an assembly – ideally, the claims that are made *ad extra* are also made and embodied *ad intra*.

The above outline has sketched the contours of Butler's thought laid out its core tenets and is therefore sufficient for the purposes of this essay. What has been said suffices as a starting point for analyzing an early Christian text that is concerned with an assembly and to ask the question as to the role of bodiliness in it, both with regard to the events that are being reported and the manner in which these are commented upon by the author, Paul of Tarsus.

Bodies and the Celebration of the Lord's Supper

The well-known pericope 1 Corinthians 11.17-34 clearly has to do with a gathering or assembly (cf. v. 17: συνέρχεσθε; v. 18: συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ) that Paul describes as 'the meal of the Lord' (v. 20: κυριακὸν δεῖπνον; the only time he uses this expression). It is likely the central gathering of the Corinthian Christ devotees and, as with every gathering, bodies are obviously involved – gathering without bodies is, certainly without social media and the like, quite a challenge for human persons. While this is the case, one may ask the question whether it is legitimate to analyze this text from the vantage point of 21st century theory, developed in relation to political demonstrations: is the risk of anachronism not too big?²¹ This is a real problem, but it can be addressed well by being aware of the exegetical context as a whole, both historical and literary: one is not dealing with a demonstration in the context of the Arab Spring, but with a gathering of Christ devotees in Corinth in the middle of the first century CE. Also, it is worth stressing that a meal like this was in antiquity, at least, a semi-public event and, therefore, involved in shaping the public space and the social realities of the larger community within which it takes place. This is the case in general, but the note

on ‘outsiders’ who might enter the assembly unprepared in 1 Corinthians 14.23 also indicates the ‘porous’ boundaries of this gathering, which is clearly more than just private or personal. – Being able to organize a gathering like this and to do so in a particular setting is part of the shaping of the social (and political) landscape of a city, anyway, in this case: Corinth. Against this background, the question that can be addressed is: what role do bodies and bodiliness play in all of this? Prior to addressing it, the text concerned will be presented together with a translation (NRSV).

1 Cor. 11.17-34 (NA28 / NRSV)

17 Τοῦτο δὲ παραγγέλλων οὐκ ἐπαινῶ ὅτι οὐκ εἰς τὸ κρεῖσσον ἀλλ’ εἰς τὸ ἥσσον συνέρχεσθε. 18 πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν καὶ μέρος τι πιστεύω. 19 δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι, ἵνα [καὶ] οἱ δόκιμοι φανεροὶ γένωνται ἐν ὑμῖν. 20 Συνερχομένων οὖν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ οὐκ ἔστιν κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν· 21 ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν, καὶ ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ ὃς δὲ μεθύει. 22 μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν; ἢ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ καταφρονεῖτε, καὶ κατασχύνετε τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας; τί εἶπω ὑμῖν; ἐπαινέσω ὑμᾶς; ἐν τούτῳ οὐκ ἐπαινῶ. 23 Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἣ παρεδίδοτο ἔλαβεν ἄρτον 24 καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ εἶπεν· τοῦτό μοι ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. 25 ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι λέγων· τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ

17 Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. 19 Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. 20 When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. 22 What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you! 23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when

διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, ὅσάκις ἐὰν πίνητε, εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. 26 ὅσάκις γὰρ ἐὰν ἐσθίητε τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον καὶ τὸ ποτήριον πίνητε, τὸν θάνατον τοῦ κυρίου καταγγέλλετε ἄχρι οὗ ἔλθῃ. 27 Ὡστε ὅς ἂν ἐσθίῃ τὸν ἄρτον ἢ πίνῃ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ κυρίου ἀναξίως, ἔνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου. 28 δοκιμαζέτω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτὸν καὶ οὕτως ἐκ τοῦ ἄρτου ἐσθιέτω καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ποτηρίου πινέτω· 29 ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτῷ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα. 30 διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ὑμῖν πολλοὶ ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἄρρωστοι καὶ κοιμῶνται ἱκανοί. 31 εἰ δὲ ἑαυτοὺς διεκρίνομεν, οὐκ ἂν ἐκρινόμεθα· 32 κρινόμενοι δὲ ὑπὸ [τοῦ] κυρίου παιδευόμεθα, ἵνα μὴ σὺν τῷ κόσμῳ κατακριθῶμεν. 33 Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί μου, συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε. 34 εἴ τις πεινᾷ, ἐν οἴκῳ ἐσθιέτω, ἵνα μὴ εἰς κρίμα συνέρχησθε. τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ὡς ἂν ἔλθω διατάξομαι.

he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. 30 For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

The gathering of Christ devotees in Corinth clearly has, in Paul's representation of it – and likely as an actual historical event –, a bodily character: its goal is eating the meal of the Lord (κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν, v. 20). At the same time, this event has, as was indicated above,

frequently been discussed in anything but bodily terms: it has frequently been discussed in relation to Paul's views concerning this meal, but not in relation to actual physical experience. The problem with the gathering of the Corinthians is that it does not lead to the formation of community (or the experience of communion), but instead leads to divisions, possibly (probably even) because people receive foodstuffs at different moments in time (cf. v. 21: ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν). As a result, some are (still) hungry, while others have already drunk more than enough (καὶ ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ ὃς δὲ μεθύει, v. 21). When one assumes – as is frequently done with regard to this text –,²² the structure of a Greek symposium for this gathering, then the drinking follows from the eating and the moments of being hungry and being drunk are temporally the two points of a meal that are furthest away from each other. This difference in time (and physical feeling/satisfaction) also performatively expresses a difference in physical (and therefore: social) place in the group.²³ This takes place, to be sure, in a setting that Paul indicates is at least semi-public in character – which would agree well with the meals of groups such as *collegia*, voluntary associations in general –²⁴; he does so by means of his remark about the houses of the participants (which are private), out of which they have moved to another place, which is best considered semi-public, regardless whether it is someone's private home or a rented hall v. 22: μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν).²⁵ These two observations concerning the text, i.e. that it is a(n at least) semi-public gathering and that the gathering has a bodily character, give reason to read the text through the lens of Butler's theory. This leads to the following four observations (of unequal length).

First, by gathering 'in the flesh', as the Corinthians can be assumed to do with a certain (weekly) regularity, they claim the right to do so by performing it: they show that they take the liberty to gather and to thereby shape the social and political sphere of their city. This goes far beyond a theoretical right of gathering, or beyond agreeing with each other noetically. In a certain sense, they occupy their part of the public – or at least: semi-public – space and make themselves visible by doing so. This takes place through the meal, with all the kinds of physical relating to others (or rather: other bodies) that belongs to it. As a meal, certainly a *symposium*, functions as a (utopian) 'scale model' for society, the physical gathering also expressed a claim to be embody a particular social ideal as a group (of bodies) and to make this ideal known and visible. This communication of this ideal involves, of course, all kinds of physical behavior again, given that patterns of behavior and social roles in a group are shaped physically, especially at a meal: who gets what dish, of which size, who is served by whom

and at what time, who may recline, who has to remain standing, etc. These topics were much discussed in antiquity and part of the ‘symposiastic theology’ (or ideology) present at every meal – the themes were the same, even if their accentuation and evaluation could vary strongly.²⁶ Through their way of gathering, the Corinthians also show performatively what it means to gather in the name of Christ (or ‘the Lord’). That they claim space in the name of this *kurios* is potentially controversial (or even subversive): an assembly of early Christian bodies gathers in the name of a crucified person and, beyond this, they do so while understanding themselves as members of the *risen body* of this crucified person, whose rising (and appertaining apotheosis) is at odds with the end of his earthly life very much indeed, and end that was in itself highly performative and theatrical as well.²⁷ This is to say: the body of a crucified person was displayed by the powers determining the social and political space, the powers of (the Roman) empire, the *kurios* of which, i.e., the emperor, acted through his deputy, the roman procurator Pontius Pilate and had shown – or had intended to show – that he could do with Jesus’ (subversive) body whatever he wanted. That this body is now venerated as belonging to the realm of a different *kurios* (YHWH) and even being a *kurios* itself (cf. the emphasis on the *Lord’s* supper), while the people doing so consider themselves as parts of precisely this body of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12) is a controversial manner of claiming a place in the public realm.²⁸ All the political, social, religious and ethnic claims that may be implied in such an act and ideology are enacted performatively by the Corinthian Christ devotees by gathering physically for a meal.

Second, Paul’s criticism of the Corinthians is concerned precisely with the *physical* aspects of their gatherings: in which way are their assemblies physically and socially (or: socially and therefore physically or vice versa) expressive of their coming together in Christ’s name? Or rather: as Christ’s body (an item that occurs frequently in the text, cf. vv. 24,27,29). In fact, his criticism is – and this is something not commonly stressed – directly based on physical sensations: hunger and inebriation are the experiences that Paul refers to when he commences his argument. Also, in the continuation of his argument, physicality is key: the problem at stake is the physical separation of bodies because they are not eating together. This leads to the paradoxical situation of a gathering that, due to the manner in which people “gather”, precisely prevents the (social and physical) experience of coming together and communion (cf. v. 18: συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ...σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν), at least for a (substantial?) part of the community and Paul has listened to complaints arising from this group (cf. v. 18: ἀκούω). Performatively claiming space and creating a new social space *as*

the body of Christ and doing so in particular through the celebration of the Lord's Supper, leads, therefore, to new physical challenges: how do these various bodies relate to each other in a suitable manner? Or, vice versa: a social space – in the technical sense of the word –²⁹ is always also a physical space, given that people relate to each other, thereby realizing freedom (or experiencing the lack thereof) and shaping relationships of power, through the body and by existing as bodies (accordingly, gender always also plays a role).³⁰ In Paul's argument, this leads to the organization of the social and moral (or even: theological) order by means of ordering bodies, in particular in relation to the organization of such bodies' meal gatherings and the chronology and choreography of providing them with food and drink.

Third, the question of the manner in which all of these bodies relate to each other, or the manner in which they ought to do so, can be discussed from the perspective of gender,³¹ even when retaining a focus on questions of hunger and thirst.³² This is the case because gender has, even *par excellence*, to do with both bodiliness and with shaping relations of power – and both clearly play an important role in the Corinthian community. Of course, Paul may seem not to address gender in 1 Corinthians 11.17-34, or, at least, not to do so in a manner that catches the eye right away – elsewhere in this letter, he does so, of course, for instance in the earlier verses of ch. 11, a section that has received much feminist and/or gender-sensitive exegetical attention. Yet, in this context, it is good to stress the obvious: gender has to do with more than just what constitutes “masculine” and “feminine” behavior in the sense of behavior that is or isn't suitable for men and/or women, which would, to some extent, reduce gender to sex, while it is much more than that, especially when taking into account its intersectional construction. More specifically, it is also of key importance to consider the manner in which such constructions took shape in the ancient world. There, aspects that have much to do with the body, such as physical and emotional self-control and (ditto) control of others, both in the face of violence, violent emotions, or physical challenges such as food shortage (or an abundance of food and the issue of overindulgence – cf. regarding both Philippians 4.11-12: ...ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι αὐτάρκης εἶναι. οἶδα καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι, οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν· ἐν παντὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν μεμύημαι, καὶ χορτάζεσθαι καὶ πεινᾶν καὶ περισσεύειν καὶ ὑστερεῖσθαι).³³ Beyond self-control – and not being controlled by others! – exercising control (influence, authority) over others constituted an important aspect of ancient constructions of gender; it was notably associated with masculinity (i.e. a social role and position considered ‘masculinity’, to a substantial extent dissociated from having a male body). Such control could be exercised socially, politically (e.g., rhetorically), but quite emphatically also

physically – even without direct physical (e.g., sexual) contact:³⁴ by determining what someone else's body is or isn't permitted to do. One's behavior at the dining table would be a kind of behavior that would reveal one's gender (given one's position, one's manner of eating and drinking, one's determination of the behavior of other bodies, etc.). When considering physicality at the Corinthian table from this perspective – and irrespective of the question of whether a literal table was involved; opinions diverge on the matter –, a few other issues become more visible.

To begin with, the fact that there are differences among various members of the body (*qua* congregation) is made clear by 'making use' of the body. As some are still going hungry, while others are already drunk, the body is the site of (or the tool for) the construction of hierarchies within the community, in particular among those who can at different moments – and chronology implies order in the sense of hierarchy here – avail themselves of food (first part of a symposium) and drink (the second part).³⁵ Against the background of gender conventions in the ancient world, this division of positions and roles can be understood as being gendered as more and less masculine. Being able to enjoy food and drink, while others must wait for it can be seen as exercising (physical and social) power over others, with obvious consequences in the field of gender. At the same time, however, getting drunk is a sign of excess and of being unable to keep one's own desires in check and of failing to moderate oneself; such inability to deal with one's own access to abundance makes someone less credible as a being gendered 'masculine' as the 'dominant gender'.³⁶ Furthermore, the bodies of some Corinthians, those who are consuming food first and drinking excessively (their food consumption is not commented upon by Paul), are also a threat to another (masculine) body: that of the Lord, probably in a number of senses: disrespecting the historical and risen body, the ecclesial body and the sacramental body (cf. esp. v. 29: ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτοῦ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα. - σῶμα multiple meanings of the word probably coincide here). This is interesting, given that in this manner, the behavior of the excessive Corinthians challenges the authority of the Lord, which is, obviously, also a gendered challenge. – For several reasons, therefore, the question that is also at stake in vv. 17-34 of 1 Corinthians 11 is: what gender performances suit the Christian community? That this is a deeply physical question is clear – it is all about bodies, hungry, drunk and otherwise.

In line with this, Paul's solution to the questions raised by all of these problematic, conflicting and challenging Corinthian bodies, is just as physical as the problem is. He points to the tradition of (and the betrayal of) Jesus' body, as it is expressed by means of the (broken) bread and (poured out) wine of the 'last supper', that is related both to the physical body of Jesus and to the (just as physical) 'body' of Corinthians that is, in a very real sense (for Paul and the Corinthians), the body of Christ, the Lord. In fact, the body of Christ appears in (at least) three ways in this text: (a) as the 'historical' body of Christ, as it was broken and given; (b) the 'sacramental' body of Christ: Christ's body is there through the *anamnesis* of the tradition of Jesus' words and actions (in all likelihood connected to food and drink on the Corinthian 'table'); (c) the 'social' body of Christ, the body (consisting of the bodies) of the assembled Corinthians (cf. also 1 Cor. 12), which is at the same time the exalted Lord's (earthly) body. In each case, the physical character of the body of Christ is of central importance (even 'symbolic' interpretations of the body, in particular the 'social' and 'sacramental' ones, do assume physicality, even if some views of the symbolic are so noetic that all bodiliness seems to disappear) and it is closely related to the actual physical bodies of the Corinthians. This can be illustrated in various ways.

For instance, according to Paul, Christ's body – the historical one that determines the shape of the social body, as it is to be performed and thereby constituted at the communal gatherings – is normative for the bodies of the Corinthians and determines how they can and cannot legitimately behave. Being molded together into the body of the one who gave himself *bodily* for them, also means that this body, once given and now present in its *anamnesis*,³⁷ determines how the various bodies of the members of the ecclesial body of Christ are to relate to each other. Disrespecting the (ecclesial) body (of the Lord; consisting of the actual bodies of the Corinthian Christ devotees) therefore means to disrespect and sin against the body of the Lord as such (cf. v. 27: Ὡστε ὃς ἂν ἐσθίῃ τὸν ἄρτον ἢ πίνη τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ κυρίου ἀναξίως, ἔνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου). All of this is enacted through the actual, physical bodies of the Corinthians, in particular through their hunger and drunkenness. Consequently, Paul's solution to these troubles is to discipline the bodies involved by means of the body of Christ. As always when bodies are involved, gender plays a role here. In the ancient world, masculinity was characterized by self-control and control over others and unmasculinity by being controlled by others or something else (e.g., lust). In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul employs the body of Christ³⁸ in an intriguing manner to physically discipline the seemingly dominant and masculine Corinthian elite – as these are likely in view

when the already drunk members of the group are mentioned: they must be higher ranking members of the community, who express their higher position in the social – and therefore: gender – hierarchy physically: they receive their food earlier than others and they can drink to excess, while they are in a position to make others experience hunger during their own indulgence in food and drink. In doing so, they exercise control over others. – To this should be added: it is a kind of control that they lack over themselves, being drunk indicates a lack of self-control and, hence, a less than fully credible performance of masculinity. Paul, then, makes the body of Christ (in whichever sense) normative and uses it to reorder the various Corinthian bodies and their behavior – in particular the elite members of the community are made to submit their dominant and indulging bodies to the body of Christ, thereby also giving pride of masculine place to Christ's body, not their own. The characteristics of Christ's body and one's belonging to it regulate the physical behavior of the Corinthians and makes it impossible – from Paul's point of view, no one knows how his letter was received – to perform one's bodily existence in such a manner that this happens at the expense of the bodily suffering and marginalization (hunger!) of other bodies. Although this may seem like the simple replacement of one set of bodies at the top of the gender (and social) hierarchy with another body (Corinthian elite bodies and Christ's body respectively), more is at stake than just this: the disciplining nature of Paul's appeal to Christ's body has not just to do with the fact that this body is the body of the κύριος, but, in all likelihood, also with the manner in which this body enacted this status, i.e., by its self-giving as the apex of its pro-existence, as indicated by τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in v. 24, an act of salvific self-giving (or self-sacrifice if sacrifice that should be the background), that is seen to occupy the top of the social and moral (and therefore: gender) hierarchy, while simultaneously subverting it and redefining social and gender hierarchies (akin to Mark 10:45 and parallels: ...ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἤλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν).³⁹ The gathering and the identity of the gathering as the body of Christ therefore regulates the bodies of the participants in the gathering and thus introduces new norms concerning social hierarchy and gender – the truly elite and masculine is not the one who overindulges (not a characteristic of credible masculinity to begin with) at the expense of others, but the one who aligns his (in all likelihood men are in view primarily) body with the body of Christ, submitting to that body that gave itself for the well-being of one's own body.

Fourth, following this lengthy third point, the body also plays a key role when it comes to not valuing the body of Christ (in its threefold sense, cf. v. 29) appropriately: such behavior leads

to weakness, illness and death (v. 30: διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ὑμῖν πολλοὶ ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἄρρωστοι καὶ κοιμῶνται ἱκανοί).⁴⁰ A long exegetical tradition exists that interprets these consequences of disrespect for Christ's body in a symbolic or metaphysical sense, but neither the text itself nor its immediate (literary) context provide any real reason for doing so. This is even less the case when v. 30 and its context are read with a focus on the body and bodily matters, as is the case in this essay. In fact, vv. 29-30 close the circle that started in v. 21 (esp. the references to hunger and drunkenness there: ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ ὃς δὲ μεθύει): the quality of performing and (dis)respecting the body of Christ in Corinth is experienced in and through the very bodies that do this performing – they experience hunger, drunkenness, weakness, illness and death. Accordingly, the body of Christ is not just physical in its historical and sacramental forms, but it is also physical and experienced physically in its social performance *qua* gathered community.

Concluding Observations: The Resurrection of Bodies in 1 Corinthians 11

The exegetical remarks presented here enable the bodies that matter so much in 1 Corinthians 11 to rise from their exegetical invisibility. This took place by means of an interpretation inspired by the work of Judith Butler that intentionally looked for the role of (gendered) bodies in this text. This leads to three conclusions in particular.

First, the perspective of Butler allows one to stress the social (and therefore political and gendered) character of the early Christian gathering; this has, of course, been emphasized in earlier research, but its physical aspect can now be seen in sharper relief.

Second, by intentionally looking for bodiliness, it becomes possible to see how physical experiences (hunger, drunkenness – also weakness, illness and death) are a source of and a starting point for Paul's theology. This is not something that this, supposedly anti-bodily, early Christian thinker is accused of very often. The dimension of bodiliness did not only appear to be the starting point of Paul's thinking, but also an important aspect of his strategy for reordering the gathering of the Corinthian community. Paul's entire argument is concerned with various Corinthian bodies that need be reordered in relation to each other, in order to be able to performatively create a social space that lives up to its name, i.e.: body of Christ. The normative body and point of orientation is Christ's own body in a threefold sense: Christ's historically given body, the broken bread making this body present sacramentally and the social body of the Corinthians that is to perform according to its deepest identity: as the body

of Christ, the risen Lord. The bodies of the Corinthians need to align themselves with and submit themselves to Christ's body, which has been given to them – or pay the price.

Third, in all of this, gender plays a key role – as it is always the case when bodies are involved. It is very well possible to understand Paul's instructions to the Corinthians as an attempt to discipline and reorder behavior that can be seen as 'hypermasculine' by ancient standards, i.e. behavior that exercises control over others (even if self-control – drunkenness! – is lacking). The excessively dominant and in that sense 'elitist' behavior of certain Corinthian Christ devotees is curtailed by means of an appeal to the body of Christ: that body and its behavior (self-giving; pro-existence) are normative, not the maintenance of gendered social hierarchies in the community. The body of Christ, as the body of the κύριος, occupies the 'top' position and all other bodies need to submit to it and align their behavior with the demands of this body. Whereas this could be the simple replacement of one kind of (masculine) 'top dog' with another, the characteristics of Christ's body, i.e. the manner in which it performs being this body, prevents this: the salvifically self-giving character of this body does not position it at the top of the hierarchy, but also subverts the structure of this hierarchy: control over others is no longer decisive, but instead self-giving (with implied self-control) is. This also changes what 'hegemonic' or ideal-typical masculinity might entail – at least from Paul's perspective; whether the Corinthians picked up on it, remains to be seen.⁴¹

These three observations may serve to adjust generally received views of Paul's manner of theologizing a little. That is to say, if the above is somewhat convincing, it becomes inviting to begin reading Paul as a theologian of the body, in the sense of a theologian who takes his starting point in physical, bodily experiences and proceeds from there to develop his reflections on, for instance, such bodily practices as the Lord's Supper. Bodies and their performances matter deeply, not just to Judith Butler, but also to Paul of Tarsus. It is to be hoped that the latter's interpreters will follow suit in their readings of Paul.

¹ Dr. Marco de Waard, Amsterdam University College, first pointed me into the direction of Judith Butler's work in this respect. This contribution was presented earlier as "Embodied Assemblies in Early Christianity: Judith Butler in Corinth" at the European Association of Biblical Studies Annual Conference (Leuven, 18 July 2016), in the NOSTER Research Collaboration Group "Meals in Search of Meaning" (Amsterdam, 31 January 2017) and the conference Critical Theory in the Humanities. Resonances of the Work of Judith Butler (Amsterdam, 6 April 2017). An earlier Dutch version of this paper appeared as: Peter-Ben Smit, 'Het lichaam van Christus aan tafel. Paulus van Tarsus en Judith Butler in Korinthe,' in: Mirella Klomp, Peter-Ben Smit and Iris Speckmann (ed.), *Rond de tafel. Maaltijdviereen in liturgische contexten* (Berne: Berne Media, 2018), 47-59. – In what follows, references to secondary literature are exemplary, not exhaustive – relatively frequent references to earlier own publications are also intended to indicate where more extensive discussion has been offered and bodies of secondary literature been discussed. – I am grateful Liz Marsh, Vrije Universiteit (Amsterdam), for correcting the manuscript linguistically; all remaining infelicities are, of course, my own responsibility.

² Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

³ On this not unproblematic terminology, cf. Andrew McGowan, 'The Myth of the Lord's Supper: Paul's Eucharistic Terminology and its Ancient Reception,' *CBQ* 77 (2015), 502-520.

⁴ These questions continue to be of relevance, given that many positions that were (or began to be) taken then continue in as institutional positions as the confessional stances of various churches – cf. e.g., Hans-Josef Klauck, 'Presence in the Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 in the Context of Hellenistic Religious History', in: Ben. F. Meyer (red.), *One loaf, One Cup: Ecumenical Studies of 1 Cor 11 and Other Eucharistic Texts: the Cambridge Conference on the Eucharist, August 1988* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1993), 57-74, which is positioned in the ecumenical landscape. – A newer interpretation that emphasizes the physical, but still focuses on the question what the Paul and the Corinthians thought they were eating is: Alice Bach and Jennifer A. Glancy, 'The Morning After in Corinth: Bread-and-Butter Notes, Part I,' *Biblical Interpretation* 6 (2003), 449-469.

⁵ Cf. classically: Hans Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl* (Bonn: Weber, 1926); since the end of the 20th century, the work of Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) and Matthias Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft* (Tübingen: Francke, 1996) exercise a determining influence on historical research into early Christian meals.

⁶ A classical contribution is: Gerd Theissen, ‘Social Integration and Sacramental Activity: An Analysis of 1 Cor 11:17-34,’ idem: *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity. Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 145-174. – Ritually informed (and focused) research often moves between different disciplines, but does not always pay much attention to the body as such either, see, e.g., Peter-Ben Smit, ‘Ritual failure, Ritual Negotiation, and Paul’s Argument in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34,’ *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 3 (2013), 165-193, who largely ignores the body (and see also the literature referred to there).

⁷ This does not mean that interpretations hailing from other contexts are automatically more sensitive in this respect, cf., e.g., the self-consciously African interpretation of J. Ayodeji Adewuya, ‘Revisiting 1 Corinthians 11:27-34: Paul’s Discussion of the Lord’s Supper and African Meals,’ *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (2007), 95-112, who does not refer to bodily aspects.

⁸ That it is a challenge to discern the bodily aspects of 1 Corinthians 11.17-34 is evident from a contribution dedicated specifically to bodiliness in 1 Corinthians, Jerome H. Neyrey, ‘Body Language in 1 Corinthians: The Use of Anthropological Models for Understanding Paul and His Opponents.’ *Semeia* 35 (1986), 129-170, which does not discuss this pericope at all.

⁹ Cf. exemplary: Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁰ Cf., e.g., Sarah J. Melcher, Mikael C. Parsons and Amos Young (ed.), *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary* (Waco: Baylor University, 2017).

¹¹ Butler, *Notes*, 9: “acting in concert can be an embodied form of calling into question the inchoate and powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political.”

¹² Butler, *Notes*; the key thesis of the book as summarized on its jacket.

¹³ The examples mentioned here have been taken from the author’s experience; the emphasis is on the role of the body in communication (and not on bashing electronic media, which also involve corporeality, albeit in a different, quite possibly: less intense, manner). – Another

author who has emphasized the physicality of language and communication is Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), e.g. op 155: “Silence obliges us to confront vulnerability and finitude and thus is involved with all the various challenging and inviting aspects of language we have been considering thus far. It is there in the acknowledgement of indeterminacy; there are no conclusive words for a genuinely open future. It is part of the incompleteness of any linguistic project. It is implicit in the acknowledgement of our bodiliness, the fact that we do not speak from a safe distance above and beyond the flesh but in the whole of our physical presence, whether we are ‘literally’ speaking or not. And it is a condition of the renewal of speech: we cannot handle the radical reshaping of our speech without listening, hearing what we do not usually let ourselves hear, silencing the habitual chatter and buzz of egotistical self-reflection.” (155). – The relationship between (spoken) language and bodiliness in 1 Corinthians cannot be discussed in this contribution, neither can Williams’ own approach.

¹⁴ Butler, *Notes*, 33: “that politically induced condition of maximised vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence, to street or domestic violence, or other forms not enacted by states but for which the judicial instruments of states fail to provide sufficient protection or redress.”

¹⁵ Cf., esp. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, ²1999).

¹⁶ Butler, *Notes*, 28.

¹⁷ Butler, *Notes*, 9.

¹⁸ This factual, bodily enactment of rights is, in a certain way, much more important than a theoretical right to gather, for example, that cannot or may not be enacted.

¹⁹ Alexis Bushnell, ‘Book Review: Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly by Judith Butler,’

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/book-review-notes-toward-a-performative-theory-of-assembly-by-judith-butler/> (accessed on 1 October 2017).

²⁰ Butler, *Notes*, 89.

²¹ Another item that might problematize the thought experiment that the current contribution consists of is Paul’s own physical absence; however, an ancient letter was thought to

compensate for precisely such physical absence. Cf. the general discussion in Hans-Joseph Klauck, *Ancient Letter Writing and the New Testament* (Waco: Baylor University, 2006).

²² Cf., e.g., the discussions in Smith, *Symposium*, Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl* and Soham al-Suadi, *Essen als Christusgläubige: Ritualtheoretische Exegese paulinischer Texte* (Tübingen: Francke, 2011).

²³ V. 22 (μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν; ἢ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ καταφρονεῖτε, καὶ καταισχύνετε τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας; τί εἶπω ὑμῖν; ἐπαινέσω ὑμᾶς; ἐν τούτῳ οὐκ ἐπαινῶ) is sometimes understood as an indication that Paul argues in favor of a strict distinction between a non-sacramental meal (the German *Sättigungsmahl* is a good term for this, yet virtually untranslatable) and the ritual meal of the Lord's Supper, as this would, indeed, become common practice in later centuries. This is not, however, what Paul says explicitly. It is just as plausible that Paul relegates meals that stress social differences to the private sphere. This would suit the literary (and historical) context of 1 Corinthians 11 much better, given that chs. 8-10 are clearly concerned with 'real' meals, in which real foodstuffs matter, which are clearly the main ritual gatherings of the Corinthian community. See for an appertaining interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, e.g., John S. Kloppenborg, 'Precedence at the Communal Meal in Corinth,' *Novum Testamentum* 58 (2016), 167-203.

²⁴ Cf., e.g., the observations of Smith, *Symposium*, or the contributions in, e.g., idem and Hal E. Taussig (ed.), *Meals in the Early Christian World. Social Formation, Experimentation and Conflict at the Table* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

²⁵ The precise physical arrangements of the Corinthians community, however important they may be for the actual physical encounter of a place and of physical encounters in a space, cannot be discussed here. It has been chosen to remain relatively general when it comes to the precise spatial arrangements. In the Pauline text hunger is of primary significance, not so much the experience of reclining, standing, sitting, or the physical space between the participants in the Lord's Supper. For a review of extant literature on space and the Corinthian community, see, e.g.: Richard Last, *The Pauline Church and the Corinthian Ekklesia: Greco-Roman Associations in Comparative Context* (Cambridge University, 2015), 60-62, and Jenn Cianca, *Sacred Ritual, Profane Space: The Roman House as Early Christian Meeting Place* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 2018), 122-124.

²⁶ Cf., e.g., the materials collected in Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl*.

²⁷ See: Peter-Ben Smit, ‘Crucifiction? Crucifixion as a Failed Ritual in Phil. 2,’ *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 46 (2016), 12-24, and the literature referred to there.

²⁸ Bodiliness in 1 Corinthians 12 also invites further exploration, not least because of the reference to genitals in v. 23, the experience with which and the treatment of which Paul uses constructively in his theologizing there.

²⁹ On social space and the New Testament, see especially the (as yet unpublished) PhD dissertation of Mike Pears, *Towards a Theological Engagement with an Area of Multiple Deprivation: The Case of the Cornwall Estate* (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2015).

³⁰ An aspect of shaping space that is likely to play a role in 1 Corinthians 11.17-34 and that is heavily gendered, but that is not mentioned explicitly, is that of places to sit, recline, or stand – see on which, Annette Weissenrieder, ‘Contested Spaces in 1 Corinthians 11:17-33 and 14:30: Sitting or Reclining in Ancient Houses, in Associations and in the Space of Ekklesiā’, in: David L. Balch and Annette Weissenrieder (ed.), *Contested Spaces: Houses and Temples in Roman Antiquity and the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 59-107. The issue is much more explicit in James 2.

³¹ This analysis could be expanded to other parts of 1 Corinthians, or even the whole of the Pauline corpus, of course – the head covering for women that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 11.5 or, by contrast, the (leading) role of Chloe in 1.11; this would go beyond the scope of this contribution, however – what is clear from 1 Corinthians 11.17-34 anyhow is that communal ideal and their embodiment were the subject of constant negotiation (as is the question of the veil a few vss. earlier on in the same chapter – even if Paul takes position on a particular side of the debate, the text does witness to the discursive development of early Christian [ritual] identity as well).

³² Other aspects of gender – as Paul mentions them elsewhere in the letter, e.g., with regard to speech and head coverings (cf. 1 Corinthians 11.5; 11.34-35) – also play a role in the gendered performance of early Christian identity at the Lord’s Supper, but as Paul focuses on questions of hunger and drunkenness in these verses, I follow him in focusing on these two items in relation to gender.

³³ Cf. for overviews, e.g., Moises Mayordomo, ‘Construction of Masculinity in Antiquity and Early Christianity,’ *Lectio Difficilior* 2006:2, Jeremy Punt, ‘Gender Studies and Biblical Interpretation: (How) Does Theory matter?,’ *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa* 24

(2018), 69-94, and Peter-Ben Smit, *Masculinity and the Bible - Survey, Models, and Perspectives* Brill Research Perspectives in Biblical Studies (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

³⁴ The dynamics involved in all of this are summed up well by Seneca Maior (*Controversiae* 4), when he records a lawyer's argument that 'sexual service is an offense for the freeborn, a necessity for the slave, and a duty for the freedman' ('Inpudicitia in ingenuo crimen est, in servo necessitas, in liberto officium'), as quoted in: John Boswell, *Christianity: Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: Chicago University, 2015 [1980]), 78 and 78n80.

³⁵ As argued, for instance, by Peter Lampe, 'Das korinthische Herrenmahl im Schnittpunkt hellenistisch-römischer Mahlpraxis und paulinischer Theologia Crucis (I Kor 11,17-34),' *ZNW* 82 (1991), 183–213, 186-188.

³⁶ Cf. also the role of Herod in Mark 6parr. and the appertaining exegesis in Peter-Ben Smit, 'The Ritual (De)Construction of Masculinity in Mark 6. A Methodological Exploration on the Interface of Gender and Ritual Studies,' *Neotestamentica* 50 (2017) 327–351.

³⁷ I.e. it is present through the (ritualized) Christ anamnesis, which is likely to have a close connection to the bread and the wine, in the celebrating (dining) community. Cf. the Christ anamnesis that Paul quotes himself in vv. 24-25 (which also suggest the link with the bread and the wine in the Corinthian community). On the (rhetorical) role of memory, commemoration and anamnesis in Paul's letters and in this pericope in particular, see, e.g. Peter-Ben Smit, 'Paul and Memory,' in: Paul Sampley (red.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World. A Handbook* 2 (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 147-170.

³⁸ A body that, although emasculated on the cross, was interpreted in 'hypermasculine' terms in early Christian texts, cf. e.g., Peter-Ben Smit, *Paradigms of Being in Christ* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 144-155.

³⁹ Cf. Peter-Ben Smit, 'Servant Leadership Revisited: διακονία, Masculinity and Martyrdom in Mark 10:42–45,' *Ecclesiology* 14 (2018), 284-305.

⁴⁰ See for an overview of recent and patristic interpretations: Ilaria E. Ramelli, 'Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death in 1 Corinthians 11:30,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011), 145-163; Ramelli herself argues in favor of a 'spiritual' interpretation; elsewhere (Smit, 'Failure,' 190n80), I have indicated why I do not think that this is a plausible solution; my main problems with this solution are that it (a) seems to address an uneasiness that has

more to do with concerns of the exegete involved than with Paul; (b) there are no indications in the text itself that it is to be taken metaphorically; (c) that consequences on the physical level would suit the text, otherwise quite preoccupied with matters of the body, like a glove. – David J. Downs, ‘Physical Weakness, Illness and Death in 1 Corinthians 11.30: Deprivation and Overconsumption in Pauline and Early Christianity,’ *NTS* 65 (2019), 572-588, appeared too late to take into account fully here, even though his account is consonant with what is being presented here (and with what was argued in the Dutch version of this paper, Smit, ‘Lichaam’ [2018]).

⁴¹ That the Pauline tradition did open up space for unexpected gender performances can be seen in the example of St. Thecla, as described in the Act of (Paul and) Thecla, on which, see also: Peter-Ben Smit, ‘St. Thecla: Remembering Paul and Being Remembered Through Paul,’ *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014), 551-563.

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